

REMARKS

Claims 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10-18, 20-28, 30, 31, and 33 are currently pending in the application. Claims 3, 6, 9, 19, 29, 32, and 34 have been canceled, with contents therein incorporated into various independent claims to thereby rewrite previously-allowable claims in independent format, as indicated by the Examiner in the Office Action dated December 16, 2005.

Notwithstanding any claim amendments of the present Amendment or those amendments that may be made later during prosecution, Applicant's intent is to encompass equivalents of all claim elements.

Claim 33 is allowed. Applicant gratefully acknowledges the Examiner's indication that claims 3, 9, 19, and 20 would be allowable if rewritten in independent format and have, accordingly rewritten these claims by incorporating their contents in respective parent claims.

Claims 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10-18, 20-28, and 30-32 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,848,064 to Cowan, further in view of US Patent 6,237,144 to Delo. Claim 34 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Cowan, further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,414,751 to Yamada.

Although Applicant disagrees with the Examiner's position, rewriting independent claims to include allowable subject matter of claims 3, 9, 19, 20 and cancellation of claims 32 and 34 renders these rejections moot.

III. CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, Applicant submits that claims 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10-18, 20-28, 30, 31, and 33, all the claims presently pending in the application, are patentably distinct over the prior art of record and are in condition for allowance. The Examiner is respectfully requested to pass the above application to issue at the earliest possible time.

Should the Examiner find the application to be other than in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to contact the undersigned at the local telephone number listed below to discuss any other changes deemed necessary in a telephonic or personal interview.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any deficiency in fees or to credit

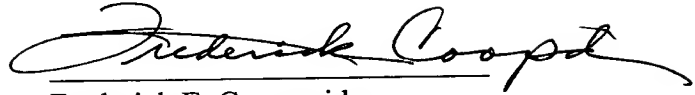
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any overpayment in fees to Attorney's Deposit Account No. 50-0481.

Respectfully Submitted,

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